



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

**UNITED STATES  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 6  
AND  
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**United States**  
**Environmental Protection Agency – Region 6**  
**Memorandum of Understanding**  
**With**  
**Texas Southern University**

**Introduction**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has an ever-increasing need for well trained, qualified professionals in environmental policy, economics, science and information to meet the needs of the future. Innovative strategies must be developed and implemented to assure an adequate supply of highly-trained and skilled personnel for the accomplishment of environmental research, policy and program development. To help meet this objective, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being established between EPA, Region 6 and Texas Southern University.

**Program Intent**

This MOU builds upon the previous collaborations between Texas Southern and EPA Region 6. It is intended to provide a significant positive impact on the following areas: 1) improve the quality of environmental science and Texas Southern technical education; 2) increase the relevance of Texas Southern's research projects and other work to EPA's environmental and public health missions; and 3) increase the number of culturally diverse students electing to pursue graduate study and research careers in areas including environmental policy, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. It is expected that Texas Southern's capacity to develop environmental specialists for potential EPA employment will be significantly enhanced while important contributions also will be made to EPA's overall research and developmental programs.

**Background**

Texas Southern University is a historically black, co-educational, research-intensive public institution of higher learning. In 1973, the Legislature designated Texas Southern University as a "special purpose institution for urban programming," after concluding that its educational programs and services particularly suited the needs of urban residents. Upholding this distinction, TSUs academic programs continue to provide training to professionals in the most critical areas of urban concern: the environment, health, education, public works, law enforcement, environmental justice,



urban planning, and business. The university maintains a commitment to effectively serve students from diverse academic, social, economic, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds. The university also utilizes its human, cultural and physical resources to enhance the surrounding metropolitan community.

The mission of the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs (SPA) at Texas Southern University is to serve as an urban focused community of learning dedicated to educating professionals who will plan and administer environmentally healthy and sustainable communities at the local, state, national and international levels of society. The School of Public Affairs is uniquely situated to lead the way in integrating sustainability science in the study of politics, administration of justice, urban planning and environmental policy, and to promote this approach in practices that can more effectively respond to urban problems and social inequality in the United States and around the world.

This MOU is intended to facilitate joint educational, research and outreach activities that will strengthen the university's capabilities and also enhance and expand the types of assistance EPA is able to provide to underserved communities. By enabling these initiatives to succeed, this MOU will increase the relevance of -EPA-University partnership agreements to the environmental justice community.

### **Program**

The areas of cooperation covered by this MOU include but are not limited to:

(1) Student Development Through Internships, Employment and Information Sharing

(2) Volunteer Programs

(3) Faculty Coordination and Appointments

(4) Curriculum Development and Environmental Awareness

(5) Mini-Courses/Lectures/Seminar Participation

(6) Local Environmental Activities

(7) Community Outreach and Environmental Awareness

(8) Technical Assistance

(9) Faculty Research Participation

(10) Geographic Information System Data and Applications

## **1. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND INFORMATION SHARING**

Texas Southern students may be encouraged to take advantage of the many programs that exist at EPA, with emphasis on those designed for student research participation and training. The EPA Research Triangle Park (RTP) office researchers may also join in collaboration of student development. In concert with EPA, Texas Southern may also identify undergraduate and graduate students to participate in paid and non-paid internships to satisfy curriculum requirements.

Texas Southern students may be introduced to student employment programs and given guidance on how to successfully apply for these programs when they are available. The *Student Pathways Programs* include but are not limited to Internship Program, Recent Graduates Program, the Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF) and the Workforce Recruitment Program for Students with Disabilities.

Vacancy announcements for internships and other programs, as well as other federal employment opportunities, will be posted on the U.S. Office of Personnel Management website at [www.usajobs.com](http://www.usajobs.com) and may be sent to the Student Career Services Center at Texas Southern for distribution to students. Texas Southern may also include a link to the USAJobs website on its website.

Texas Southern may provide a calendar of career fairs to EPA for participation. EPA could use this avenue to advertise open vacancies and/or provide Texas Southern student's information about opportunities and projects available at EPA.

Texas Southern faculty may include students in prearranged trips to EPA facilities as learning opportunities, and EPA and Texas Southern may work to bring Texas Southern faculty and students into collaborative efforts with EPA research labs and personnel

## **2. VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS**

Texas Southern may encourage students to volunteer and participate in local projects sponsored by EPA. All volunteer programs exceeding eight weeks may at Texas Southern's discretion be considered for earned credits. These research projects would be in any program area of interest to the student or other highly visible programs of major concern to EPA or TSU. Texas Southern and EPA staff may develop the administrative mechanism for this program as part of the implementation of this agreement.

## **3. FACULTY COORDINATION AND APPOINTMENTS**

Texas Southern faculty may visit EPA facilities such as Research Triangle Park (RTP), and Regional or National Offices. EPA and Texas Southern faculty may discuss and coordinate to identify topics that may be of mutual interest for the purpose of



planning outreach activities, research, coursework or other work.

EPA may facilitate opportunities to appoint Texas Southern faculty members to laboratory staffs for summers, academic years, or sabbaticals. Texas Southern may provide adjunct faculty appointments for approved EPA employees who are participating in this program and who are funded either through Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments or other EPA support budgets. As appropriate, EPA employees may serve on courtesy appointments to Graduate committees.

#### **4. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS**

EPA may work with the staff and faculty of Texas Southern to supplement the environmental dimension of their curricula and programs. EPA may support Texas Southern in keeping abreast of the latest information concerning developments in environmental law and policy, staying current on emerging technologies and environmental policies, advances in environmental technology, and discoveries in environmental research.

EPA and Texas Southern may coordinate or collaborate to identify special areas of emphasis in the area of environmental justice, and this may include development of curriculum that is designed to allow students to interact with underserved communities or otherwise become more knowledgeable about the needs and perspectives of residents in these communities.

#### **5. MINI-COURSES/LECTURES/SEMINAR PARTICIPATION**

EPA may provide resource persons to help in teaching courses and/or conduct lectures in public policy, economics, environmental science, environmental justice, environmental law and auditing, and other related areas consistent with the agency's expertise and the needs of the university. At EPA's request Texas Southern may provide faculty as speakers or participants at EPA sponsored events. EPA could also take part in an appropriate Texas Southern Lecture series.

#### **6. LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES**

EPA and Texas Southern may each assure that the other is aware of local environmental events well in advance of the scheduled dates and encourage participation. This may include EPA's Earth Day activities and local Texas Southern activities. Ways may be pursued to increase student participation, including design projects (e.g. awareness about recycling and using recycled products). EPA's Region 6 may inform Texas Southern of its annual plan for Earth Day activities and invite students to participate and design projects/activities for this event. Texas Southern may also include EPA in their local environmental observances and activities for joint participation.



## **7. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS**

EPA and Texas Southern may collaborate in developing environmental education/awareness workshops/publications and other materials designed to reach out to local communities. A particular focus of these activities may be increasing community participation and awareness of environmental issues affecting communities. These efforts may also include grades K-12.

EPA and Texas Southern may coordinate and collaborate to identify underserved communities, organizations and others that may benefit from activities or opportunities that either EPA or Texas Southern may provide or arrange, related to environmental justice.

EPA and Texas Southern may coordinate and collaborate to develop special outreach materials on particular subjects (such as public participation opportunities) or materials that are designed to reach communities with unique needs (such as language).

## **8. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

EPA may provide technical assistance to Texas Southern for the development of proposals for non-EPA federal assistance programs. When appropriate and feasible, EPA may provide such assistance for the development of proposals to other sources of funding, i.e. foundations, state agencies, etc. This technical assistance may include consultations, meetings, workshops, and seminars at Texas Southern or at EPA facilities. The combined use of web casts and/or video teleconferencing could be used as an advantage for both.

Texas Southern may provide technical assistance and research on issues important to underserved communities including, but not limited to, environmental justice issues identified by EPA. For example, assistance might be needed to facilitate meaningful input by communities on what technology should be used by environmental permit applicants, (such as EJ Screen) to develop realistic benchmarks of success that can be used by communities to measure progress, or to provide community residents with an understanding of basic legal principles necessary to fair representation

EPA may provide assistance to Texas Southern in developing or reviewing technical information for community outreach materials, presentations or meetings. Texas Southern University will not regard any technical assistance as an EPA endorsement, and is aware that EPA may not provide any recommendation for proposals.

## **9. FACULTY RESEARCH PARTICIPATION**

EPA and Texas Southern may jointly identify and develop opportunities for faculty participation in projects focused in the area of public policy, environmental studies, and mission critical or emerging areas of concern. This may include facilitating relationships between personnel at EPA research areas with Texas Southern faculty.



These efforts may include students to enhance opportunities for student development and preparation for potential employment by EPA.

EPA and Texas Southern may jointly identify research topics of particular concern to underserved communities or which could be expected to contribute to our knowledge about factors and mechanisms which may make certain populations or communities subject to greater health risks, create additional exposure routes or may cause some persons to be more vulnerable to specific environmental conditions.

### **Organization Operation**

The parties may establish an EPA/Texas Southern Leadership Group to advise and make recommendations on the implementation of this MOU, and to monitor the attainment of the objectives outlined in this MOU. This Group shall be augmented as appropriate by EPA specialists and staff members and also by appropriate representatives from Texas Southern. The primary responsibilities of the Group may include:

- 1) Preparation of a collaborative program plan and the preparation of annual program and project reports.
- 2) Submission of the program plan, including resource requirements to the R6 Regional Administrator and the Texas Southern President to support inclusion in appropriate budgets.
- 3) Both EPA and Texas Southern will designate a responsible person to be actively involved in implementing the agenda of this MOU and monitoring progress. **At Texas Southern, this will be a senior professor in the Department of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy.** EPA will designate a leader at the level of Director.
- 4) Develop metrics for measurement of program success.
- 5) General program liaison necessary to meet mission goals and objectives.
- 6) Development and recommendation of policies and projects to help meet objectives of this MOU. These will be forwarded for the approval of institutional management within EPA and Texas Southern.
- (7) Convening on at least a quarterly basis, to review the implementation of this MOU.

### **Limitations**

Each party will bear its own costs of carrying out this agreement. All of the activities that EPA intends to take in connection with this agreement described in this MOU are subject to the availability of funding. This agreement is not intended to transfer EPA funds to Texas Southern or to acquire services from Texas Southern. All parties agree that they will not submit a claim for compensation to each other for activities

performed under this MOU. Any transactions between EPA and Texas Southern that involve the transfer or commitment of funds will be negotiated separately. Any specific activities undertaken by EPA under this agreement must be consistent with EPA's existing statutory authorities, regulations and policy.

This MOU does not create any exemptions from federal policies and /or regulations relating to public involvement, employment, and competition for grants and contracts. Nothing in this MOU exempts TEXAS SOUTHERN from complying with any applicable federal, state or local environmental law or regulation.

If either party finds that any activity undertaken pursuant to this agreement may result in the creation of intellectual property or may require the sharing of proprietary information, the parties agree to negotiate separate agreements to address those matters.

The Parties acknowledge that under 5CFR Sec. 2635.702(c), EPA may not endorse the purchase or sale of commercial products and services provided by TEXAS SOUTHERN. The Parties agree to ensure that promotional materials describing or resulting from this MOU do not contain statements implying that EPA endorses TEXAS SOUTHERN or its products or services. This includes statement to the public in news releases, publications on web sites or any other media. The Parties agree not initiate or distribute any press releases, publicity matters or other promotional materials related to or referencing the subject matter of this agreement without prior approval of the other party.

#### **Non-Discrimination in Employment**

The parties to this MOU agree not to discriminate against any employee, student or applicant for employment because of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or age.



### Summary

The undersigned agree to the program described in this MOU. Any party shall retain the right to withdraw from this MOU by providing written notification to the other parties. This agreement does not supersede any other existing agreements between Texas Southern and EPA.

Signed:



Mr. Ron Curry

April 9, 2013  
Date

Regional Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6



Dr. Sunny Ohia

4/9/13  
Date

Vice President for Academic Affairs  
& Research  
Texas Southern University